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ABSTRACT

Details of Fall 1976 enrollment statistics at women's colleges are reported in this bulletin. Among findings were that there were 125 institutions that identified themselves as women's colleges (with a total enrollment of 109,549); 38 percent of the women's colleges were attended exclusively by women (in contrast, 75 percent of men's colleges enrolled only men); women's colleges averaged 876 students (4.7 percent of whom were men); nine out of every 10 students in women's colleges were undergraduates; Blacks constituted the largest racial minority group attending women's colleges, accounting for eight percent of the total enrollment; 24 percent attended college on a part-time basis; and most women's colleges were private four-year institutions located near the eastern seaboard. (Author/PHR)

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National Center for Education Statistics

BULLETIN

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE / Education Division

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PROFILE OF WOMEN'S COLLEGES: ENROLLMENT STATISTICS

With this bulletin on women's colleges, Marie D. Eldridge, Administrator of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), announces the first in a series of brief descriptive reports on topical issues in education. The reports will be based on staff analyses of NCES data banks.

Highlights

Examination of fall 1976 enrollment reports by institutions of higher education reveals the following about women's colleges:

-- There were 125 institutions in the Nation which identified themselves as women's colleges, with a total enrollment of 109,549.

-- Only 47 women's colleges (38 percent) were attended exclusively by women. By contrast, 82 of 109 men's colleges (75 percent) enrolled men only.

-- Women's colleges averaged 876 students, 4.7 percent of whom were men. By contrast, men's colleges averaged 274 students, 4.1 percent of whom were women.

-- Nine out of every 10 students in women's colleges were undergraduates.

-- Blacks constituted the largest racial/ethnic minority group attending women's colleges, accounting for 8 percent of the total enrollment.

-- Among those students attending colleges for women, 24 percent or 25,892 attended on a part-time basis.

-- Most women's colleges were private 4-year institutions located near the eastern seaboard.

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NCES 79-397

Identifying Single-Sex, Coordinate, and Coeducational Institutions

In 1976, 125 colleges and universities in the Nation classified themselves as women's colleges, according to the Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS).1/ Other survey results appear below:

Institutional Classification	Number
Total	3,075
Women's colleges	125
Men's colleges	109
Coordinate	13
Coeducational	2,828

The Sex of Students at Single-Sex Colleges

The enrollment data in this bulletin are based on the 3,068 institutions that reported their total enrollment and selected student characteristics for fall, 1976.2/ Analysis of those data reveals the following:

Only 47 women's colleges (38 percent) were attended exclusively by women. By contrast, 82 men's colleges (75 percent) enrolled men only.

1/ Item 19 of the HEGIS form entitled "Institutional Characteristics of Colleges and Universities: 1976-77" asked institutions to classify themselves by the sex of the student body, with categories for (a) men only; (b) women only; and (c) coeducational. Coeducational institutions were also asked whether enrollment in any school, college, or curriculum at a given level is restricted to one sex (item 20). This item identifies coordinate institutions, which enroll both men and women, usually in separate subdivisions. Those institutions which had completed a similar HEGIS form in previous years were forwarded a copy of the information on file coupled with a request to note changes where necessary.

Judging from the responses to the above questions, institutions interpreted item 19 to refer principally (rather than exclusively) to men or women.

HEGIS forms are sent to all institutions of higher education in the United States and its outlying areas which are accredited or preaccredited by an accrediting agency recognized for such a purpose by the Commissioner of Education, U.S. Office of Education. A more complete description of the criteria for inclusion in HEGIS appears in Arthur Podolsky and Carolyn R. Smith, Education Directory, Colleges and Universities: 1978-79 (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, 1979), pp. ix-xvi.

2/ Enrollment statistics are drawn from institutional responses to HEGIS "Fall Enrollment and Compliance Report of Institutions of Higher Education, 1976." Racial/ethnic data are collected only in alternate years. The 1978 enrollment data were not available at the time this bulletin was written.

The percentage of women in the student body for various kinds of institutions appears in the table below. Most colleges for women (109 of 125) had student bodies comprised of at least 90 percent women. The student body of Blue Mountain College in Mississippi contained the lowest proportion of women (66 percent) of all women's colleges identified.

Number of institutions of higher education, by percentage of women in student body and type of institution

Percentage of women in student body	All institutions of higher education	Type of Institution			
		Women's colleges	Men's colleges	Coordinate	Coeducational
Total	3,068	125	109	13	2,821
90-100	144	109	0	4	31
80-89	54	12	0	0	42
70-79	50	2	0	0	48
60-69	173	2	0	1	170
50-59	791	0	0	1	790
40-49	1,034	0	0	2	1,032
30-39	334	0	1	2	331
20-29	152	0	2	0	150
10-19	133	0	5	1	127
0-9	203	0	101	2	100
Exclusively women	48	47	0	1	0
Exclusively men	88	0	82	1	5

The table also reveals a difference in self-designation: colleges with a high proportion of women in the student body designated themselves as "women's colleges" more often than colleges with a high proportion of men designated themselves as "men's colleges." In 1976, 144 institutions had student bodies with at least 90 percent women. Of these, 48 were attended by women only. Of the 96 remaining institutions in this category, approximately 2 out of 3 called themselves "women's colleges." By contrast, 203 institutions had student bodies with at least 90 percent men. Of these, 88 were attended by men only. Of the 115 remaining institutions in this category, approximately 1 out of 6 classified itself as a "men's college."

Enrollment Size

Women's colleges enrolled 109,549 students in 1976, i.e., 1 percent of all students and 2 percent of all women in higher education. By comparison, men's colleges enrolled 29,901 students, representing 0.3 percent of all students and 0.5 percent of all men. The full-time equivalent enrollment at women's and men's colleges totalled 92,287 and 28,[illegible]08 respectively, accounting for 1.1 and 0.3 percent of the [illegible]ation's full-time equivalent enrollment in higher education.

Approximately 3 out of 4 women's colleges were private 4-year institutions, with a comparable share of women's college enrollees.

Women's colleges ranged in size from 8,730 students at Texas Woman's University, a public university, to 24 at Mt. Sacred Heart College, a private 2-year college in Connecticut. Women's colleges averaged 876 students while colleges for men averaged 274 students. By contrast the average institution in 1976 enrolled 3,625 students. When comparisons are limited to similar-type institutions, women's colleges are near the norm. For instance, private 4-year colleges for women averaged 908 students, and those for men averaged 263, as compared with 1,196 for all private 4-year colleges in the Nation.

Private 2-year women's colleges were smaller in size, averaging 411 students per institution. The two public institutions -- Texas Woman's University and Mississippi University for Women -- had the highest average enrollment of all women's colleges. There were no public 2-year women's colleges.

Enrollment in women's colleges, by control and level of institution

Control and level of institution	Number of institutions	Total enrollment	Average size
Total	125	109,549	876
Private 4-year	95	86,296	908
Public 4-year a/	2	11,740	5,870
Private 2-year	28	11,513	411

a/ Includes one university

Nearly half of all women's colleges (46 percent) enrolled between 500 and 999 students, while another third (31 percent) enrolled less than 500. By contrast, 86 percent of the men's colleges were under 500 in enrollment, and 98 percent were under 1,000.

Location of Women's Colleges

Most women's colleges were located near the eastern seaboard. The tabulation below presents their regional location and enrollment.

Region	Number of women's colleges	Total enrollment
Total	125	109,549
New England	26	25,136
Mid-Atlantic	49	37,129
Great Lakes	13	10,084
Plains	8	8,294
Southeast	24	17,928
Southwest	1	8,730
Rocky Mountains	1	568
Far West	3	1,680

Of all States, New York had the greatest number of women's colleges at 23, followed by Massachusetts with 17 and Pennsylvania with 16. No other State had more than 6 women's colleges and 22 States had none.

Level of Enrollment

Nine out of every 10 students in women's colleges in 1976 were undergraduates, the largest single group being first-time freshmen. Approximately two-thirds of the postbaccalaureate enrollees were first-year graduate students. The year-by-year breakdown of level of enrollment for women's colleges is:

Level of enrollment in women's colleges

Level of enrollment	Number of students	Percent
Total	109,549	100.0
Undergraduate, subtotal	98,157	89.6
First-time freshman	28,130	25.7
Other first year	4,629	4.2
Second year	22,555	20.6
Third year	17,344	15.8
Fourth year and beyond	16,935	15.5
Unclassified	8,564	7.8
Postbaccalaureate, subtotal	11,392	10.4
First-professional	0	0.0
Graduate student		
First year	7,530	6.9
Beyond first year	2,511	2.3
Unclassified	1,351	1.2

Women's colleges enrolled no students at the first-professional level in 1976, according to the data. This finding requires brief explanation to be interpreted properly. To be classified by HEGIS as enrolled at the first-professional level, a student must be working toward a first-professional degree, i.e., a degree that signifies the completion of the academic requirements for selected professions based on programs which require at least two academic years of previous college work for entrance and which require at least a total of six years of college work for completion. This definition currently includes degrees in dentistry, law, medicine, theology, and a few allied health professions. Women's colleges in 1976 had no first-professional degree programs, as defined.

That women's colleges emphasize undergraduate education is readily apparent even when comparisons are restricted to private 4-year colleges. The following tabulation makes the comparison:

Level of enrollment for private 4-year colleges
(in percentages)

Level of enrollment	All colleges	Women's colleges	Men's colleges
Total	100	100	100
Undergraduate, subtotal	82	91	79
Underclassman	45	47	42
Upperclassman	31	36	36
Unclassified	7	9	2
Postbaccalaureate, subtotal	17	9	21
First-professional	5	0	10
Graduate student			
First year	6	5	5
Beyond first year	5	2	5
Unclassified	1	2	1
Total enrollment	1,557,726	86,296	25,990

NOTE.--Details may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

According to the data, the great majority of graduate students at women's colleges were in their first year of study. By contrast, men's colleges and other private four-year institutions in the Nation enrolled a higher percentage of students at the graduate level and, of these, approximately fifty percent were beyond the first year of study.

Full-time versus Part-time Attendance 3/

A total of 25,892 students at women's colleges (24 percent) attended on a part-time basis in 1976. This compares with 39 percent for all institutions and 8 percent for men's colleges.

3/ Full-time students are defined as those whose academic load, coursework, or other required activity is at least 75 percent of the normal full-time load. This is usually determined by dividing the total number of credits required for completing a program by the number of terms normally needed to obtain them.

Detailed comparisons give a better perspective of part-time attendance. The table below restricts comparisons to private 4-year institutions.

Enrollment size and percent attending part-time at private 4-year colleges

Level of study	All colleges		Women's colleges		Men's colleges	
	Number	Percent part-time	Number	Percent part-time	Number	Percent part-time
Total	1,557,726	26	86,296	24	25,990	8
Undergraduate	1,283,117	20	78,660	18	20,557	4
Postbaccalaureate	272,308	54	7,636	78	5,433	27

At the undergraduate level, the table shows slightly fewer part-time students at women's colleges than at all private 4-year institutions (18 versus 20 percent), but more than at men's colleges (4 percent). At the postbaccalaureate level, striking differences occurred: 78 percent of the women's college enrollees were part-time, compared with 54 percent for all private 4-year institutions, and 27 percent for men's colleges.

Student Sex and Part-time Attendance

In 1976 many single-sex colleges enrolled a small number of students of the other sex, usually on a part-time basis. Specifically, the 78 women's colleges which admitted men in 1976 enrolled 5,195 males, averaging 67 per institution. More men than women attended women's colleges on a part-time basis (67 percent versus 21 percent).

By contrast, the 27 men's colleges which admitted women enrolled 1,228 females, averaging 45 per institution. More women than men attended men's colleges on a part-time basis (60 percent versus 6 percent).

Racial/Ethnic Composition of the Student Body

Women's colleges enrolled students of varied racial/ethnic origins, although most enrollees were white. The 1976 statistics on racial/ethnic origins are as follows:

Racial/ethnic origin	Number of students	Percent
Total	109,549	100.0
White, non-Hispanic	95,737	87.4
Black, non-Hispanic	8,382	7.7
Hispanic	2,078	1.9
Asian or Pacific Islander	918	0.8
American Indian or Alaskan Native	501	0.5
Non-resident alien	1,933	1.8

Black students were the largest minority group, comprising nearly 8 percent of the total enrollment and outnumbering all other racial and ethnic minorities combined. When compared with other institutions, women's colleges (as well as men's colleges) enrolled proportionately fewer racial and ethnic minorities. White students comprised 82 percent of the total enrollment in all institutions of higher education in 1976, 87 percent at women's colleges and 89 percent at men's colleges. Restricting comparisons to private 4-year institutions, white students comprised 83 percent of the enrollment at all such institutions, and 89 percent at both women's and men's colleges.

Availability of additional data

Detailed tables concerning enrollment in women's colleges are available in draft form and may be obtained from John Michael, National Center for Education Statistics, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., Room 3153-C, Washington, D.C., 20202. These tables are planned for inclusion in a later report.